



Bringing Your Baby Home

Photos/Notes Page

Bringing Your Baby Home

Safety Seats – Make Sure Your Baby Travels Safely

To keep your baby safe, put her in a safety seat every time she rides in a car or taxi. Holding your baby in your arms will not protect her. It is against the law. Your baby will need a car seat to leave the hospital.

A safety seat cannot protect your child unless you use it correctly. Choose a seat that fits your baby's height and weight. Check the safety label for this information. To make sure you install your seat correctly, follow the directions that come with it, or call 1-800-CAR-SAFE. Make sure your baby seems comfortable and her head and body are well supported. Everyone else in the car should wear a seat belt, too.

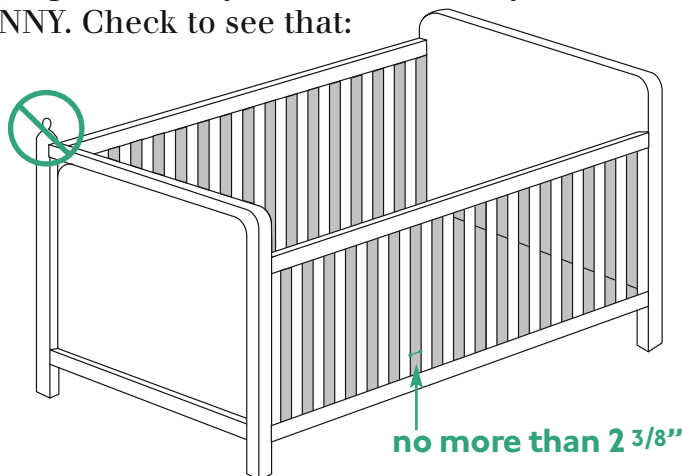
Children should ALWAYS ride in the back seat until age 13. Infant safety seats should face backwards until the baby is at least 20 pounds and one year old. While it is natural to want to be close to your baby, no baby or young child should be in the front seat. **Never put a baby in the front seat if there is a passenger side air bag.**

If you do not own or cannot afford a safety seat, call 1-800-CAR-SAFE to find out about loan programs. Second-hand seats may not be safe. Use only new car seats that have a safety label.

For more information about safety seats, call the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

Safe Sleeping

At first, you may want to have your baby sleep in a bassinet or cradle by your bed. As she grows, move her to a regular crib. Most new cribs meet safety standards, but you should still check your crib. Avoid using an older crib, if possible. If you are not sure if your crib is safe, call 1-800-83-DANNY. Check to see that:



- The slats are no more than 2 and 3/8 inches apart.
- The paint is not peeling and is lead-free.
- The mattress is firm and flat.
- The mattress fits snugly—no more than two adult fingers should fit between mattress and crib.
- The rail height is at least 26 inches above the mattress.
- Corner posts are no higher than 1/16 inch, including decorations.
- Screws are tight and none are missing.

Keep crib sides up and locked whenever your child is in it. Place the crib away from windows, window cords, curtains, space heaters, and shelves with things that could fall on the baby.



Newborns sleep from 12 to 20 hours a day. Each baby's sleeping pattern is different. At first, babies often sleep more during the day than at night. Your baby may take many short naps or a few long ones. It may take some time for your baby's sleeping pattern to become regular.

When parents lose sleep, it is stressful for the family. If you are too tired, you cannot care for your children well. Try to sleep when your baby does. To encourage your baby to sleep at night, you may need to keep daytime naps short. If you have questions about your baby's sleep, talk to your doctor, nurse, or call the Parental Stress Line at 1-800-632-8188.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

SIDS is the unexplained death of a healthy baby. SIDS is very rare.

It happens most often to infants between two and four months. We do not know the cause, but these things may reduce the chances of SIDS:

- **Put your baby to sleep on her back.**
- Use a firm, flat mattress.
- Do not put pillows, quilts, comforters, or soft toys in her bed.
- Use a fitted crib sheet.
- Burp your baby before putting her down to sleep.
- Do not overdress your baby.
- Do not overheat the room.
- Do not place your baby's crib near a window.
- Do not let anybody smoke near your baby.
- Breastfeed your baby.
- If your baby is premature or sick, ask your provider about the best sleeping position.

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in her own crib. If you want to stay close to her at night, bring the crib into your room, next to your bed. This will make it easier to feed and comfort your baby and then put her back in her crib.

**For more information, call the 24-hour SIDS Hotline at
1-800-641-7437.**

Caring for Your Newborn

Much of what you need to know about baby care, you will learn by experience. The following information may help.

Holding Your Baby

Your baby will not be able to support her head for a couple of months. Until then, she needs your help. Here are some ways you can hold your baby and offer good head support.



Hold her in front of you, so she can look out at the world.
Put one hand under her bottom and the other hand across her chest.



Hold her in one arm—with your hand under her bottom,
and your arm and elbow supporting her back and head.



Hold her on your shoulder—with one hand on her bottom,
the other behind her head and neck.

Bathing and Dressing

For the first couple of weeks, give your baby sponge baths. Avoid the tub until the umbilical cord has fallen off and the belly button has healed. For a sponge bath, wash your baby on a firm, flat surface such as a changing table or a counter with a towel on it. Keep your baby warm by covering the areas you are not washing.

Babies get burned easily. Make sure the bath water is not too hot or too cold. Test it on the inside of your wrist or use a bath thermometer. Be sure the hot water heater in your home is set at 120°F or less.

Have all your bath supplies ready before you begin.

- Soft, clean wash cloth
- Towels
- Gentle soap and shampoo
- Clean clothes
- Fresh cotton balls
- Clean diaper

Once or twice a week, shampoo your baby's scalp. Rinse well—keep shampoo out of his eyes.

After the belly button has healed, your baby can have a bath in a tub. Hold your baby securely. Wet babies are slippery. Support his head the whole time. Some babies get upset when put in water, so be patient.

Remember: Never leave your baby alone, even for a minute. A baby can drown quickly in very little water.

To Give Your Baby a Sponge Bath or a Bath in the Tub:

1. Begin with the eyes. Use a cotton ball soaked in warm water and no soap. Gently wash around his eyes, wiping from the nose outward.
2. Use a wash cloth to clean his face. A gentle soap is fine on the face, just not near the eyes. Wipe **around** his ears, but not inside.
3. Clean his neck, chest, arms, and legs. Be sure to wash under the arms and between skin folds.
4. Clean his genitals and bottom last.
5. Dry him gently with a clean towel.

Dressing Your Baby

Your baby may squirm while getting dressed. Use clothes that are easy to put on and take off. Clothes with wide neck openings, snap closings, and stretch or knit fabrics are good choices. Open the neck wide before pulling it over your baby's head. Then reach through each sleeve, and pull your baby's hands through. Stretch and pull at the clothes, not at the baby. Dress your baby as warmly as you are dressed. Keep the temperature where your baby sleeps the same as the rest of your home.

Diapering

Your baby may need a new diaper before or after every feeding, and after every bowel movement. This can mean at least eight changes a day. Parents can choose disposable or cloth diapers. Some children have an allergic reaction to disposable diapers, or to the soaps used to wash cloth diapers. If your child has a reaction, try another brand or type of diaper or soap.

Umbilical Cord Care

To prevent infection:

- Keep the cord clean and dry.
- Fold the front of the diaper down, so it is below the cord.
- Gently clean the area where the cord attaches with warm water.

The cord usually falls off between one and three weeks after birth. If the area around the cord looks red, irritated, bleeds, oozes, or has a bad odor, call your doctor or nurse.

Circumcision Care

If your baby has been circumcised, there may be some soreness and bleeding. Put a little petroleum jelly on a gauze pad and wrap it around his penis. Change the gauze pad each time you change the diaper. Staying in a wet diaper will irritate the penis. Healing takes 1-2 weeks. If penis bleeds, oozes, or has a bad odor, call your doctor or nurse.

To Change a Diaper:

Change your baby often to avoid diaper rash. You will need a clean diaper and a soft, clean, wet cloth. You may need a clean change of clothing.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. **ALWAYS keep a hand on your baby.**
3. Take off the old diaper.
4. Clean your baby:
 - ➡ Girls should be cleaned from the front to the back to avoid spreading germs.
 - ➡ Do not pull back the foreskin of a boy who is not circumcised.
5. Dry the baby well.
6. Put on a clean diaper.
7. Rinse used cloth diapers and place in a diaper pail with a lid.
8. Put used disposable diapers in bags and throw them away.
9. Wash your hands again.

Diaper Rash

Most babies get diaper rash at one time or another. Here are some tips:

- Wash the area using gentle soap and water, instead of wipes.
- Dry thoroughly.
- Use petroleum jelly or a diaper rash cream.
- Change diapers more often.

If the rash does not get better in a few days, call your doctor or nurse.

Protect Your Baby from Second-Hand Smoke

Caring for your baby also means protecting her. Keep your home smoke-free. Ask people not to smoke around your child. Babies who are exposed to smoke have more:

- Asthma attacks
- Ear infections
- Colds
- Flu
- Risk of SIDS
- Pneumonia
- Feeding problems
- Allergies
- Hospitalizations

If you stopped smoking while you were pregnant, try not to start again. You may be tempted to smoke by the stress of being a new parent. There are many programs that can help you and your family members quit smoking. Ask your doctor or nurse, or call the Smokers Quitline at 1-800-TRY-TO-STOP.

You should **never** smoke while holding or feeding your baby. If you are breastfeeding, talk to your doctor or breastfeeding counselor about reducing the nicotine in your breastmilk. Smoking takes away your energy and reduces the amount of breastmilk you can make.

Smoking causes illness and injury. Fires happen more often in homes where people smoke. In a fire, babies are hurt more often than anyone else.

Taking Care of Yourself

It is easy to forget about your own health when caring for a newborn. Remember, your baby needs **you** to be healthy. Ask your doctor or nurse how to take care of yourself after the birth of your baby. Give yourself time—it takes at least 6 weeks to recover from childbirth. It takes longer if you have had a Cesarean delivery. Limit visits from friends and family. Learn to accept help that is offered.

You may have some discomfort, such as constipation, hemorrhoids, painful urination, and soreness. Call your doctor or nurse right away if you have any of the following:

- Bleeding that soaks more than one pad an hour for more than a few hours
- Bright red bleeding after the fourth day after delivery
- New or severe pain
- A temperature of over 100.4°F for eight hours
- Any temperature over 101°F

Postpartum Check-Up and Family Planning

Six weeks after delivery is time for your postpartum check-up. Your doctor or nurse will check your recovery. He or she can help you decide about the best method of family planning for you.

You **CAN** get pregnant right after your baby is born. Condoms are the best way to prevent another pregnancy before you have your check-up.

Be sure to get a check-up for yourself every year.

You Are Not Alone

Taking care of a baby can be stressful. You may feel exhausted. You will have less time for housework and other things. Caring for your baby and yourself comes first.

All new parents need help and support. You can get help at home, answers to your questions, and emotional support. You can find a home visiting program by calling the Children's Trust Fund at 1-888-775-4KIDS. Many other resources are available:

- Your baby's doctor or nurse
- The nurses in the hospital where your baby was born
- Adoption support services, such as the Open Door Society
- Your childbirth instructor or breastfeeding counselor
- Your local Visiting Nurse Association
- New mothers' support groups
- Breastfeeding support groups
- Parenting classes
- Postpartum exercise groups
- Parental Stress Line at 1-800-632-8188
- Your local WIC program at 1-800-WIC-1007
- "Doulas," women who are trained to provide physical and emotional support to birthing mothers and their families

For more information, see pages 181 and 205-208.

If possible, ask family and friends to help out. They can bring a pizza, buy some groceries, take care of your other children, or watch your baby while you take a nap.

The Baby Blues and Postpartum Depression

During the first weeks after birth, many mothers feel sad, anxious, upset, afraid, or confused. Some mothers feel guilty about crying and feeling bad. These feelings, called the “baby blues,” are **normal** and go away quickly.

You need care, just as your baby does. Emotional support can come from friends, family, other mothers, and support groups. You are doing a very important job. You need support to do it. Adjusting to the changes in your life takes time.

Sometimes, new mothers have sad and anxious feelings that do not go away quickly or get worse. It may be postpartum depression. Call your doctor or nurse if you:

- Think about hurting yourself or your baby
- Feel like you cannot take care of your baby or yourself
- Lose interest in life
- Feel anxious, scared, or hopeless
- Have sleeping problems
- Have a hard time thinking clearly
- Do not want to eat
- Cry easily

It is important for both you and your baby to get help right away.

Eating Right as a New Mother

During this busy time, it is hard to focus on your own diet. Keep healthy foods around for snacks and quick meals. Try to choose a variety of foods within each food group.

- **Fruits.** Try fresh, frozen, canned, or dried varieties. Aim for 2 cups of fruit each day.
- **Vegetables.** Try to eat 3 cups each day. Eat more dark green veggies, such as broccoli and kale. Eat more orange veggies, such as carrots and sweet potatoes. Eat more beans and peas, such as black beans or lentils.
- **Dairy products and other foods with calcium.** Try to eat 3 cups of low-fat milk, yogurt, or cheese every day. If you cannot eat milk products, choose lactose-free products and/or foods with added calcium.
- **Whole grains.** Check labels on cereals, breads, rice, and pastas. See if grains such as wheat, oats, rice, and corn are called “whole.” At least half of your 6 servings should be whole grains.
- **Protein.** Choose lean meats and poultry. Also, choose more fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds. Try to eat 2-3 servings of protein each day.

Vitamins

Continue taking the vitamins you were taking while you were pregnant. To protect your health and the health of future pregnancies, make sure to get 400 micrograms of folic acid every day from the foods you eat and a vitamin. Foods high in folic acid are:

- Asparagus
- Black-eyed peas
- Broccoli
- Cereals with folic acid added
- Collard greens
- Dried beans and peas
- Orange juice
- Spinach

Taking a basic multi-vitamin everyday will also give you the folic acid you need.

Staying Fit



Exercise is a great way to relieve stress and get more energy.

Walk. It is one of the easiest ways to keep fit. Take your baby for walks.

Use an exercise video. There are videos especially for new moms. They may be available at your local library. While you work out, put your baby in an infant seat or on a blanket on the floor. She will probably enjoy the music and your movements.

Join an exercise class. Many YMCA/YWCAs and health clubs offer postpartum exercise classes. Some programs also offer child care.

Your New Family

Everything changes when a new baby joins the family. There are new roles and responsibilities for everyone. It takes time for partners and older children, friends, and extended family to adjust to the new baby. Your own sense of who you are changes as you become a parent to this child.

Your baby needs lots of attention from you. Other family members may feel left out. Let your family and your baby get to know each other right from the start. If you have a partner, let him or her spend time caring for the baby. Ask them to hold or rock the baby, change a diaper, or help with feeding the baby.

Other children in the family may feel that they are not getting enough attention. Try to take special time with your other children. Tell them that you still love them very much, even though you are busy with the baby. Try to include them in your baby's routine and care. You can also read or draw a picture together. A few minutes will mean a lot to a child.

A baby takes a lot of time and energy. It is hard for partners to find time for each other. Try to respect your partner's feelings. Talk to each other. Tell your partner what you need.

There will be some adjustments, but before long, your baby will not feel like a newcomer—she will be family.